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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
Thirteenth session
4-19 April 1991

SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Report on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee

1. In resolution 45/76 B of 11 December 1990, the General Assembly called, inter alia, on the United Nations system as a whole to "co-operate in a concerted manner, through its information services and the co-ordination of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), in promoting a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system" and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session on the implementation of the resolution. This report is in response to that request.

Sixteenth session

2. JUNIC held its sixteenth session at Geneva on 21 and 22 June 1990 under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, Mme Thérèse P. Sévigny (see report ACC/1990/11). Information Directors and officials of 23 United Nations bodies, including specialized agencies and related organizations, attended. The meeting considered appropriate steps to be taken in pursuance of Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) decision 1989/30, which contained specific recommendations on improving inter-agency coordination in the field of information and a revision of JUNIC's terms of reference to increase its effectiveness.

3. Regarding inter-agency cooperation in the audiovisual field, JUNIC decided to establish an open-ended working group of Geneva-based United Nations agencies, which would, among other things, draw up an in-house inventory of audiovisual equipment and staff available among those agencies and consider ways and means of pooling material and human resources.

4. The environment was singled out as the top priority issue suitable for inter-agency cooperation and there was discussion of implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. JUNIC also endorsed the proposed programme for the co-production of an international television series entitled Agenda for a Small Planet IV: Blueprint for the Future-Challenge and Response.

5. As to the electronic distribution of print materials, JUNIC supported a number of recommendations to develop a methodology with a view to implementing a system of "internal information exchange", as well as "external information dissemination". In addition, recommendations were made on ways to strengthen the co-operation between United Nations agencies and United Nations information centres and services.

6. In connection with existing JUNIC projects, support was expressed for the recent consolidation of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service/New York and the NGLS/Geneva into a single programme and administrative entity, headed by one coordinator. It was hoped that the next step, financial stability, could also be achieved. As to Development Forum, the other continuing inter-agency project, a review group was called for on the future of the publication to recommend improvements and/or an alternative.

7. At the session JUNIC considered proposals on the "United Nations system identity package", which would identify each member of the United Nations family, both as an autonomous or semi-autonomous entity with distinct mandates and responsibilities, and as an integral part of the system. Those included publishing a paid quarterly tabloid insert in a major magazine and focusing on efforts of the United Nations system relating to a specific theme and highlighting work of one or more United Nations agencies in that connection. JUNIC also took note of efforts by the Department of Public Information (DPI) to establish system-wide identification standards to improve overall coherence of the public presentation of the United Nations system. JUNIC was informed of DPI proposals to expand children's knowledge of the United Nations and its agencies.

8. Pursuant to ACC decision 1989/30, JUNIC recommended the appointment of Richard Lydiker, Information Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as Chairman of JUNIC for the period 1991-1992, which was subsequently approved by ACC in October 1990 at its second regular session. The secretariat of JUNIC would remain under United Nations/DPI administration.

Seventeenth session

9. The seventeenth session of JUNIC is scheduled to take place from 24 to 26 June 1991 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and is expected to follow up on a number of activities begun last year. According to its preliminary agenda, decisions will be taken on inter-agency co-operation in the field of information and promotion on special events such as: the International Conference on Nutrition (1992), the International Year of Space (1992), and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (1994). It will also review the information programme for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as the report of the JUNIC group to review the future of Development Forum.

10. There will be reports submitted on United Nations system participation in the Osaka Expo '90, Seville Expo '92, and Genoa Expo '92, as well as inter-agency cooperation in audiovisual productions, such as Agenda for a Small Planet IV and Azimuths Magazine, a United Nations Development Programme video magazine of short reports on various development topics.

11. With regard to computer technology in the information field, there will be discussion on: linking up with DPI's E-Mail; a common approach to the International Computing Centre (ICC) on the establishment of databases; and the proposal for a workshop on application of computer technology.

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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. In resolution 45/76 B of 11 December 1990, paragraph 1 (b) (vii), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information "continue to cover all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, and current developments in that region, and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session, in 1991".

2. Since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (A/45/533), the Department has undertaken the following activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, in compliance with resolution 45/76 B. Activities undertaken are also in compliance with General Assembly resolutions 44/41 C of 6 December 1989 and 45/67 C of 6 December 1990, through which the Department was requested to continue, in full cooperation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1990-1991.

Publications and other printed material

3. The Department continued to provide press coverage of all meetings of relevant United Nations bodies, including deliberations of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, the Security Council and the Committee on the Exercise of the

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Press releases were also issued on regional seminars and symposia held on the question.

4. Additional press releases were issued containing the texts of the Secretary-General's statements relating to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, in the occupied Arab territories and in the Gulf region, and on activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

5. The publication UN Chronicle continued to report extensively on the question of Palestine and related items. All relevant issues were also covered in general reference works of the Department, such as the Yearbook of the United Nations, Everyone's United Nations, Basic Facts about the United Nations, and The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-Keeping.

6. A new version of the pamphlet United Nations Peace-Keeping was distributed. The Department continued to distribute its publications, such as a revised version of the general information booklet The United Nations and the Question of Palestine, the booklet For the Rights of Palestinians: Work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the booklet Human Rights for the Palestinians: The Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, and the brochure The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Photographic coverage

7. A photo mission was sent by the Department from 13 October to 14 December 1990 to record Middle East peace-keeping operations. Sets of these photographs were sent to United Nations information centres and services for world-wide distribution.

Audio-visual material

8. The Department produced several video programmes which contained references to the Middle East and the question of Palestine. A UN in Action production on Security Council activities regarding the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait was used by CNN and other major television networks worldwide.

9. All aspects of the question of Palestine and related issues were covered extensively in the news and taped feature radio programmes produced by the Department. In addition to short items in news, current affairs and radio magazines, the Department continued to produce feature programmes, in both official and non-official languages, exclusively devoted to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

10. Three successive editions of the "World in Review" radio programme concentrated on Security Council debates on the protection of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

11. The weekly programme in Arabic, "Al-Majallatu Al-Natika", focused on topics which ranged from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait and the Pledging Conference for UNRWA to General Assembly debates on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

12. These issues were also included in core United Nations radio programmes, such as "Perspective", "Bonjour l'Afrique", "L'Afrique à l'ONU" and "UN News Brief".

International Day of Solidarity observance

13. To mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 1990, the Department produced and distributed a special information kit to the press and to officials attending the ceremony organized at Headquarters by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Updated information material including brochures and booklets were distributed to United Nations information centres (UNIC) and services for world-wide dissemination to assist in observance of the International Day.

14. Information centres organized a wide variety of observances and ceremonies. Among them were the following: in Brussels the UNIC, in cooperation with the Arab League and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), organized a solidarity meeting, which was attended by more than 250 guests. UNIC Lomé organized a 10-day exhibit in Togo. More than 1,000 people attended a solemn meeting organized by UNIC Paris, which included a Palestinian exhibit provided by the PLO.

Journalists encounters

15. Owing to events in the Gulf region, the Department's information programme on the question of Palestine had to be reviewed. This in turn affected the journalists encounters to take place towards the end of the year, which had to be postponed after consultations with all the parties involved.

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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Technical assistance to radio stations that are broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In resolution 43/50 H of 5 December 1988, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to provide all appropriate technical and financial assistance to the radio stations of Member States which were broadcasting or willing to broadcast United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes into South Africa, in order to enable their transmissions to be heard inside South Africa.

2. In order to estimate the possible financial implications of the above request, studies were undertaken to determine:

(a) The extent of technical assistance that might be required by individual radio stations and the total number of such stations;

(b) The number of radio stations that might wish to benefit from possible financial assistance;

(c) The extent to which currently operating transmitters might need to be upgraded in order to be heard inside South Africa.

3. The results of the studies were presented to the General Assembly in document A/44/698. In paragraph 36 of the report, the Secretary-General proposed "to consult the appropriate specialized agencies - in particular ITU and UNESCO [the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] - and funding programmes of the United Nations system, with a view to determining the most appropriate means of responding to the needs identified".

4. The report was also made available to the Committee on Information at its twelfth session, held from 5 to 20 April 1990. Based on a recommendation, inter alia, of the Committee on Information, the General Assembly in paragraph 1 (e) of resolution 45/76 B, requested the Secretary-General "to expedite his consultations regarding the provision of the appropriate technical and financial assistance to those States which are broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa in order to enable their radio transmitters to be heard inside South Africa, as identified in his report, in fulfilment of the mandate of the General Assembly reflected in paragraph 1 of that report, and to report to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session".

5. In the meanwhile, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had, on 7 September 1990, written to the heads of ITU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO, requesting them to indicate the possibility of the support of their organizations, towards meeting the needs identified in document A/44/698.

6. The Secretary-General wishes to convey to the Committee on Information the substance of the replies received from the three organizations:

(a) ITU: "Should such support be forthcoming in terms of funding by the UNDP, I can assure you of the ITU's readiness to co-operate with the UNDP in any follow-up activities, such as the preparation of project documents, recruitment, and administration of field experts. The ITU will also co-operate with UNESCO as necessary."

(b) UNDP: "The Resident Representatives in the four countries concerned, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, have reported that, regrettably, after due consultation with each Government there are no uncommitted funds remaining within the present Country Programmes for any additional purposes. However, the question will be taken into account by the Governments in the preparation of their fifth cycle Country Programmes which are normally devoted entirely to the funding of national projects and programmes."

(c) UNESCO: "Member States concerned might consider the possibility of submitting requests under UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) within the financial possibilities of this programme. Such requests could relate in particular to the training of radio broadcasters, the preparation of programmes, the purchase of communication equipment or the development of communication infrastructures and systems."

7. The Secretary-General wishes to encourage Angola, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to pursue the possibilities indicated in the responses mentioned above.